with Simone de Beauvoir, who has written of her discovery that her "destiny was bound to that of all other people; freedom, oppression, the happiness and misery of men was a matter of intimate concern to me."

IS THERE A FEMININE VOICE IN LITERATURE

Mariam Waddington

I don't know if there is a characteristic feminine voice in literature but there is a feminine view of life and certainly a content that arises out of feminine experience. When it came to electing Colette to the French Academy, one academician objected saying that she had written about nothing: just love. This objection tells us two things. First, that the masculine ideology which has shaped our world has always interpreted feminine psychology according to its own masculine principles and needs. These principles have consistently undervalued feeling and overvalued facts. Masculine ideology has also confused intuition--which is nothing more nor less than the logic of our complex emotions--with superstition, which has always only been a way of placating fear.

Every now and again a great masculine thinker has tried to legitimize emotion and its logic. There was John Stuart Mill, who, in his essay on poetry, differentiated associative from ordinary ways of thinking, and later there was A.N. Whitehead who pointed out the orderliness and logic of the emotions. And of course there was Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic movement, who struggled against heavy odds to legitimize feeling at unconscious levels and who succeeded only because he established it as a science.

It is only in the last hundred years or so that women have begun to emerge from centuries of silence and anonymity. In one of my poems I described this anonymity:

> We were always
> the floor-washers and
> the jam-makers the
> child-bearers and
> the lullaby-singers,
> yet our namelessness
> was everywhere and
> our names were written
> always in wind, posted
> only on air.

But I ended it on a note of hope, saying that now

> We are mapping adventures
> by the light of the future
> we are carving our names
> in time's forest of stone.(1)

If we had not been so brain-washed by masculine dominated media for so long, we would have taken pride in women's writing long ago. Purely impressionistically, I would say that women in literature have been innovative and original in their use of language and form--far beyond men. When allowed to have ideas, they have always had tremendous courage and persistence in putting them into action. I think of Wollstonecraft, of the Brontës, Austen and Olive Schreiner. In our time there was Gertrude Stein--she was decades ahead, not only in style but in the psychological content of her Three Lives. And what about Virginia Woolf? Not all of us may like her work but surely we must all love her books for describing so truly the motions of the inner soul of women. More recently there has been Jean Rhys who depicts, better than any other writer I know, the despair of feminine passivity. She was neglected for thirty-five years (and it was a woman who rediscovered her) while Hemingway, a much lesser chronicler of despair, was lionized and taught in every university on this side of the ocean. This is probably because most of our critics and tastemakers were then, and perhaps still are, so emotionally adolescent. Women have never been able to afford to remain adolescent because their biological structure and function--even if they never bear children--predisposes them to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of the other, however they choose to use or deny this

sensitivity.

Another innovative American writer I recently discovered is Jane Bowles; she has a humor and individuality that could have come only from a woman. She also is much neglected. Djuna Barnes, another innovative writer, enjoys only an underground reputation to this day and she might not have even that token recognition except that a man--T.S. Eliot--praised her. Anais Nin struggled for years to achieve recognition for her novels and diaries and had to wait until she was past sixty to receive attention. Even then it was patronizing and qualified--it was called good "feminine writing"--when it was really good human writing.

As with all minorities women writers have always had to be better and to achieve more than men in order to receive the same recognition. Until we have more critics and publishers who are women and who have not been shaped by the principles of masculine ideology, no one will notice that women's writing is infinitely freer from convention than men's. No one will point out that men have always feared and denied women's innovativeness. They do this largely through the most primitive of critical tools--the principle of exclusion. They simply do not notice, discuss, study or feature on television programmes . writers like Jean Rhys, Jane Bowles, Djuna Barnes and Nin among the older writers. They often sneer at Virginia Woolf.

Among younger writers they praise and notice only those who, like Erica Jong, imitate men writers and conform to the masculine ideology about women. We must never forget that the first freedom men have always been willing to grant women is a specious kind of sexual freedom which is no freedom at all unless it is matched by the freedom to think and to create according to her own individual experience. By necessity this is the feminine experience and the voice that articulates it is a feminine voice.

NOTES

1. "Women" in Miriam Waddington, The Price of Gold (Oxford: Toronto, 1976).

Beth Harvor

It was very hard for me to make a list of women writers I admire; the list could go on for the whole length of time allotted to me on this panel. So I limited myself to twelve (with a reservation here and there): Jane Austen; Charlotte Brontë; the autobiographical writing of Colette; the early and middle Doris Lessing; Simone de Beauvoir (not for most of her fiction but for one quiet brilliant novella, The Woman Destroyed); the early Margaret Laurence; almost all of Alice Munro; Isak Dinesen's Out of Africa; the short stories and some of the novels of the late great English writer, Elizabeth Taylor; the novels